

A RIVER AND AN ISLAND

JOHN STUART

An island in a river is a wonderful place. Although there is one in White River not far from Butler, many students have never seen it. This island divides the flow of the river into two parts, the channel being to the right. There are rapids on both sides of the island the current on the left side rushes between large stones. It is possible to get to the island by jumping from stone to stone from the left side only. It is fascinating to watch the changes in life around this island come with the changes of the seasons.

I

The sun is rising on its scale of declination. It has arrived at the place where the people of Siam look above their heads to see this blazing globe of noon, and astronomers say that its plane bisects the top lobe of the Analemma. We notice that the days are longer and that the air is warmer. Spring has come to Indianapolis.

With the arrival of spring, clouds come out of the west. There are the great nimbus or cumulo-nimbus clouds moving slowly at low altitudes bringing spring rains to the land. With the rains, the creeks are filled, and the rivers swell and spill over their banks. The water moves fast, and is quite cold. The river seems as if it is awake and powerful. It is at such a time as this that I like to go down to the river.

It is a day in April. The floods of early spring have receded, but the water is high. The island is still submerged. Spring wild flowers are all around. In the woods beside the river, the violets are blooming. The trilliums, bloodroots, jack-in-the-pulpits, dutchman's breeches, and May flowers are there, too. The skunk cabbages and salt and peppers have been there for a month.

The first of the spring birds are beginning to return. The robins that migrated are back. There, too, are the scarlet tanagers, baltimore orioles, purple martins, cat birds, swallows and wrens just back from the tropics.

The animals are the same as those of the winter. The squirrels and the ground squirrels are about all that one can see. I suppose that there are field mice, opossums, rats, shrews and other small mammals, but these are nocturnal in their feeding habits and are difficult to find. There are not many insects or snakes to be found in April.

One can learn a valuable lesson in industriousness from watching animals in the spring, if industriousness is a valuable lesson.

II

The sun is drooping on its scale of declination. Since spring, it has revolved about the upper lobe of the Analemma and has begun its descent of the lower lobe. It is now over Borneo and Sumatra at noon, and the days in Indiana are hot. Autumn has come to Indianapolis.

There are no rains to indicate the arrival of Autumn. There is only heat. The river is only a tiny, sluggish ribbon of water. Much of the river bed is dry and cracked. The sand of the island is burning to walk upon. Life is here, but it is slow. The most active of the living things in this autumnal heat are the insects. There are thousands of flies of all types. There are dragon flies representing several wing colors; there are horse flies; there are house flies. There are more butterflies at this time of year than at any other time; there are also more mosquitoes.

It is easy to find water snakes in the fall. At noon, they sun themselves. You will often almost step upon a snake before you will notice it or it will notice you. When it discovers that you are near, it will invariably move away. If you can find a large piece of metal or a large rock on a sand bar, there will often be a snake beneath it.

At night, the frogs in the reeds beyond the island come to life. Although you can occasionally see one in the daytime, it is at night that you realize how many there must be. It seems as if nocturnal noises are especially noticeable in autumn.

III

The sun is at the bottom of its scale of declination. The British on the Fiji Islands stay indoors at noon, away from the burning sun directly overhead. It is February; it is winter; it is cold in Indianapolis.

The visible flow of the river has been locked by ice. The trees, except the beech and the oak, are without leaves. On these two hang dead leaves, remembrances of a summer that has gone. The ground has a

thin layer of snow and more is falling. The river is a lonesome place for those who have seen it during its active period in summer, but it is not without life.

There are several kinds of winter birds. Many robins do not fly south. The cardinals and the blue jays are still here; here, too are the sparrows and the crows. Squirrels and ground squirrels are active in spite of the snow. Fish still swim under the ice, and microscopic plants and animals live there for the fish to feed upon.

Skating parties come down the river to a place just above the rapids. There is also good skating on the back ponds beyond the north bank. This place is sheltered from the wind by small hills; its only connections to the river are two channels near opposite ends of the ponds. There are hollow trees along the bank in which fires can be built. The river is a wonderful place in the winter time.

With the change in seasons comes a change of items of individual interests as items, but the fascination of the river never diminishes.

MY FAVORITE SPOT

SAM STARK

My favorite spot is in the Marion Railway car shops. This may seem strange to anybody else, but that is what I like. I like to stand in the door-way of the shops and watch the bright orange cars move about the yard. The sound of the wheels rolling over low joints is music to my ears.

The atmosphere of three brick buildings on the property is of a busy street car company. The building to the west is for storage of equipment. Much activity is seen around this building. The next one to it is

for the maintenance of equipment. Loud noises of machinery are heard from the building, especially when they are rebuilding some equipment. The third building in the row is used as storage space for spare parts. In front of these buildings is a yard with a large hedge around it, which make them more pleasing to look at.

It is about time for Mr. Hopkins to start out on a run. Hoppy boards the car as I put the trolley pole up. Then comes the rhythmic chug of the compressor. Next